

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 02576

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BE, CG

SUBJECT: BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS

REF: BRUSSELS 02248

1. FEBRUARY 19 ISSUE OF "SPECIAL" PUBLISHES SECOND LEAKED DOCUMENT CONTAINING REPORT ON FEBRUARY 11 MEETING OF FEDERATION OF BELGIAN ENTERPRISES ON AID TO ZAIRE (REFTEL). REPORT SUMMARIZES COMMENTS ON SUBJECT BY FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SECOND DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VANDEN BLOOCK AND REVIEWS GROUP DISCUSSION.

2. ACCORDING TO REPORT, VANDEN BLOOCK CHARACTERIZED ZAIRE AND BELGIAN AID PROGRAM BOTH AS BEING IN STATE OF TRANSITION. AS RESULT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN ZAIRE, GOB-GOZ RELATIONS ARE VIEWED AS BEING AT LOW POINT. ZAIRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IS DETERIORATING WHILE NATIONALIZATION OF BELGIAN ENTERPRISES REDUCES POTENTIAL BASE FOR IMPORTS OF BELGIAN GOODS. VANDEN BLOOCK IS SAID TO HAVE NOTED THAT QUESTION OF HOW LEVEL OF BELGIAN IMPORTS MIGHT BE MAINTAINED MUST BE CONSIDERED. BELGIAN AID SHOULD "LOSE ITS EMPIRICAL NATURE", BECOMING LESS INVOLVED WITH PERSONNEL PROBLEMS AND MORE ORIENTED TOWARD ACHIEVING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT. GOB SHOULD SUBMIT TO GOZ NEW PROGRAM WHICH RECOGNIZES
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ZAIRIAN NEEDS WHILE BETTER SERVING BELGIAN INTERESTS.

VANDEN BLOOCK REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED THAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT AID WILL BE REDUCED OR THAT GOB IS PLANNING TO "DROP" ZAIRE.

3. DISCUSSION AT MEETING INCLUDED CONSIDERATION OF ZAIRIAN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (INCLUDING REFERENCE BY REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIAN EXPORT CREDIT GUARANTEE AGENCY TO "ZAIRE'S BANKRUPTCY") AND REVIEWED POSSIBILITY OF CALMING SITUATION FOR BELGIAN BUSINESSMEN IN ZAIRE AND MAINTAINING BELGIAN ACCESS TO ZAIRIAN MARKET. GROUP FELT THAT BELGIAN AID SHOULD TURN FROM "PATERNALIST AND ADMINISTRATIVE" TO "PRAGMATIC AND REALIST."

4. IN ACCOMPANYING COMMENTARY, "SPECIAL" DIRECTOR PIERRE DAVISTER IS AGAIN BITTERLY CRITICAL OF FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE AND AMBASSADOR KERREMANS. HE SAYS LATTER WILL BE RECALLED SHORTLY OR CUT OFF COMPLETELY FROM CONTACT WITH ZAIRIANS. THIS TIME, WITH LITTLE EXPLANATION OF MOTIVE, DAVISTER ALSO LASHES OUT AT FOREIGN MINISTRY AFRICA DIRECTOR LEBRUN, WHOM HE CALLS PARASITE, RAT, AND INSECT. BOTH EDITORIAL BY DAVISTER AND COMPANION PIECE BY MAGAZINE'S ZAIRE CORRESPONDENT OMER MARCHAL AGAIN SEVERELY CRITICIZE GOB FOR EXCLUDING ZAIRE FROM KING'S RECENT AFRICAN ITINERARY.

5. COMMENT: SECOND FEB DOCUMENT, LIKE FIRST AND REPORT FROM PEKING PRINTED MARCH 12, PROVIDE THIN BASE FOR CRITICISM OF BELGIAN POLICY TO WHICH THEY HAVE GIVEN RISE. DAVISTER'S HAM-HANDED APPROACH SERVES TO EXACERBATE BELGIAN-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS AND TO MAGNIFY ISSUES WHICH COULD BE TREATED QUIETLY INTO PROBLEMS WHICH MUST BE CONFRONTED IN PUBLIC. ONE ASSUMES DAVISTER IS PURSUING HIS OWN VENDETTAS, WHILE CARRYING OUT EDITORIAL POLICY BROADLY APPROVED BY MOBUTU. HOWEVER CLOSE LINK BETWEEN THE TWO MEN MAY BE, MUCH OF BELGIAN PRESS AND SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS IN FOREIGN MINISTRY CONSIDER THAT DAVISTER RESPONDS DIRECTLY TO "HIS MASTER'S VOICE" AND THAT "SPECIAL" SAYS FAIRLY PRECISELY WHAT MOBUTU WANTS IT TO SAY. WHILE SOME BELGIAN OFFICIALS ARE WILLING TO ACKNOWLEDGE PRIVATELY THAT AMBASSADOR KERREMANS MAY NOT HAVE PLAYED HIS ROLE WITH REQUIRED FINESSE, THEY SEE PUBLIC CRITICISM OF HIM AND VAN ELSLANDE IN "SPECIAL" AND IN ZAIRE AS DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO POSTPONE EVEN FURTHER TIME WHEN GOZ MIGHT SIT DOWN WITH GOB TO DISCUSS COMPENSATION FOR EXPROPRIATED CONFIDENTIAL

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BELGIAN PROPERTIES. FIRESTONE

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